

This matter is being dealt with by:

Colin Pettigrew

Reference: CP/DL

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My purpose in writing is to acknowledge that these already very difficult times have become all the more difficult following the announcement of the most recent lockdown earlier this month. Thank you to all parents and carers for all that you are doing to support your children's learning as most children now are learning at home.

This is an open letter from me as Director for Children's Services which I have asked primary headteachers to share with their parent and carer community should they feel that demand for in school provision has become challenging.

I am purposely avoiding the term or notion of school closure because our schools have not closed; schools remain open and are offering education to all pupils on roll whether on site or remotely.

The pressing issue facing schools going forward, is that primary schools in particular, have experienced an unprecedented demand for critical worker provision, such that in a small number of cases they simply cannot meet this demand given the expectation that the numbers of children attending school sites should reduce significantly.

We are aware that demand for school places has been significantly higher than in previous lockdowns. The situation is changing from day to day and is different at different schools. As a result, we are supporting our schools to follow the government guidance. However, each school's capacity and circumstances varies in terms of:

- Number of children of critical workers
- Number of vulnerable children
- Safe space available
- Workforce availability
- Devices for remote learning.

One of the key planning issues for schools at this time is the subtle difference between children being "eligible" for an on-site school places against an expectation of "entitlement" to such a place.

For clarity, the overarching message from the Department for Education has advised that parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can. The Secretary of State for Health has also stated that if you are a key worker and your partner doesn't work, then you shouldn't be sending your children to school if at all possible.

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I wholly understand and appreciate that this will potentially cause much discussion, debate and, on occasion, disagreement but would urge us all to remember that we are all juggling with competing demands and that we are all trying to find a way through this.

I write therefore to ask both parents, employers and schools for some patience, understanding and trust that schools remain committed to meeting our children's needs in these unprecedented times but may not be able to meet everyone's expectation all of the time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Pettigrew', written in a cursive style.

COLIN PETTIGREW

Corporate Director
Children, Young People and Schools
Nottinghamshire County Council